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George and Jewell Wilson Building Listed to the Alabama Register

The Alabama Historical Commission listed the George and Jewell Wilson Building at the corner of Lapsley Street and First Avenue in Selma to the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage.

It held the offices for George Wilson, Sr., the first black licensed contractor in Selma, and the Dallas County Voters League, founded in 1945 to help blacks become registered voters.

Wilson is credited with constructing many historic buildings in Selma while working from this building. In 1964, the “Courageous Eight”, steering committee members of the Dallas County Voters League, met in this building and decided to invite Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Selma to assist the voting rights movement. Their combined efforts led to the 1965 Voting Rights March from Selma to Montgomery resulting in the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

According to civil rights leader, Dr. F.D. Reese, “many important decisions regarding unity of purpose for total success in the Voting Rights struggle were made in the Jewell Wilson building...”

The George and Jewell Wilson Building is a gateway landmark into this neighborhood. It, along with R.B. Hudson High School, Selma’s first Black High School, Selma University, Selma’s first Historically Black College, and the Boynton House, provides the visitor with a sense of the self-sustaining middle class community that supported the internationally recognized voting rights movement.

The building directly relates to the historic march route, now a National Historic Trail, National Scenic Byway and All-American Road. Its preservation significantly enhances the ongoing interpretation of Selma’s role in the voting rights movement.

The Alabama Register is an official listing of buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts. These properties, which may be of national, state, and local significance, are deemed worthy of preservation by the Alabama Historical Commission.

Listing to the Alabama Register is an honorary designation and carries no restrictions or financial incentives.

To protect, preserve, and interpret Alabama’s historic places is the mission of the Alabama Historical Commission, Alabama’s state agency for historic preservation.

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